



All Is Not Lost

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I'm a notorious loser. Not a "total failure" kind of loser. More of a "where-in-the-world-is-my-wallet" kind of loser. I have incriminating video footage from my wedding rehearsal in which I'm running around like Bridezilla hollering, "EVERYONE STOP! WHERE DID I LEAVE MY PURSE?!" I have found my keys in the trashcan after a long and desperate search, and my poor husband has stopped counting the number of times I call, hysterical over something I've misplaced.

Just yesterday I lost something. This time it was truly serious. I had lost items of a personal and confidential nature, and the items didn't belong to me. I had lost children's thoughts and feelings, pains and hopes (not to mention addresses and phone numbers.)

As a therapist, I have an obligation to keep clients' personal information secure, and I carry that conviction over to my ministry. For the last five years that ministry has been a fantastic program my church has adopted called Divorce Care 4 Kids. Kids come to DC4K in the midst of a family breakup, hesitant and unsure. Some are crying and don't want to leave their parents. Some simply say, "I won't talk" as I usher them into the classroom. However, within the first few minutes, they realize that every single child in the room has experienced what they are experiencing, and there is a tangible breath of shared experience. "I am not alone. There are other kids like me." They become vulnerable and begin to trust us with their hearts.

During that first session, the children fill out forms stating who they live with, how long their parents have been separated and what they feel about the divorce. Parents also fill out a form with names, addresses, phone numbers and information about visitation, custody arrangements and concerns they have for their child. All of these forms stay with me. They are deeply personal, sometimes sharing stories of the parents' personal struggles and information about the nature of the break-up. Moms and Dads en-

trust their children into my team's care, leaving the raw stories of their lives in my hands.

And I lost them. After saying goodbye to the last child, I put my green DC4K bag over my shoulder and went to my car. When I got home, the bag wasn't in my car. I called the church and the custodian said he hadn't seen it in the parking lot. I left a message for our Kid's Church liaison, but she didn't call back. It was 10 p.m. and I was sitting empty-handed at my kitchen table. In shock, scared, angry at myself. My whole plan was to get home, settle into something comfortable and read through the stories of this new group's lives. I wanted to pray over them, learn a bit about their personalities, understand their history. And I was empty-handed. What if I had left the bag in the parking lot and someone picked it up? My kids could be in someone else's hands. And if they weren't in my hands, they weren't safe.

That's when God spoke to me so gently. Yet with a lion's roar. *Susan, these children are not in your hands. These children are in My hands. I know their story. I know their pain. I have cried with them. I have seen the depths of their souls. You cannot hold them like I can hold them. They are safe in my hands.*

I went to bed, attempting to trust him. Yet I still woke up hoping for a call saying my bag had been found. The call was not good. My green DC4K bag had still not been found. In tears, I decided to drive over to the church to look for myself, asking a friend for prayers as I drove. As she prayed, God finally got through my hard head.

Okay, Jesus. I get it. I surrender these children to you. I love them, so I leave them in your capable hands. Finally, I was at peace.

As I pulled into the church parking lot, the leader of our recovery ministry walked out with a smile. In his hands was my green DC4K bag. They had just found it. I smiled through my tears and took hold of the bag loosely, knowing without a doubt there is One who has a tight grip on me. □

—Susan Reedy